

Starting Points: Mental health and Employment

Mental health conditions are common. In fact, 1 in 4 of us will experience a mental health difficulty in any given year ([Time to change](#)). In 18/19, 30% of disclosed student disabilities at SHU were mental-health related.

Should I disclose my mental health condition to an employer?

'There is no general duty to disclose your disability to an employer' ([ACAS](#)). An exception to this is, for example, the armed forces. Disclosure means that you will be protected under the [Equality Act \(2010\)](#), which helps to ensure that people with a disability are treated fairly. If you do disclose then an employer is obliged by law (Equality Act 2010) to make reasonable adjustments ([ACAS](#)). Under the [Equality Act \(2010\)](#) a person is disabled if they have a **physical or mental impairment** which has a substantially adverse and long-term effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

You may find it helpful to explore the following:

- [Disability Rights UK: telling people you're disabled](#)
- [MIND: applying for jobs](#)
- [Time to change: telling your employer](#)
- What are reasonable adjustments? [ACAS](#) and [MIND](#)
- [Rethink - work and mental illness](#)
- Can an employer ask about health/disability prior to a job offer? Citizens Advice discuss this [here](#) and [ACAS here](#)
- [MIND: Can I be asked about my mental health when I apply for a job?](#)



Reasonable adjustments

What are reasonable adjustments?

'Under the Equality Act (2010) a person is disabled if they have a **physical or mental impairment** which has a substantially adverse and long-term effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Employers must make **reasonable adjustments** to ensure workers with disabilities are not disadvantaged and take steps to remove, reduce or prevent obstacles a disabled worker or job applicant faces.' ([ACAS](#))

What kind of adjustments could I ask my employer to make?

- The type of adjustments that you may find helpful will depend upon the nature of your difficulties and the job you are in / applying for
- It's helpful to think about the types of adjustments that might be helpful in advance (you could discuss this with others e.g. your GP, university disability/wellbeing team, social worker or family)
- Some examples of adjustments (from MIND): changes to your working area, changes to your working pattern/hours, spending time working from home, being allowed to take time off work for treatment, assessment or rehabilitation, temporarily re-allocating tasks you find stressful and difficult or being allocated a mentor
- Other examples might be: having more regular meetings with your manager, getting extra support with running group sessions / doing presentations, working in a quieter area and so on
- What's reasonable? MIND explore some of the factors that can impact this here
- For more information, see MIND's page here

When and how can I ask for reasonable adjustments?

- If you do decide to disclose your disability, you may choose to do this during the application process, prior to interview, or at a later stage (e.g. after a job offer). However, an employer can't be expected to make adjustments if they do not know that you have a disability
- At which point you disclose depends upon your own preferences, as well as at which points you feel that you need adjustments. For example, if you need adjustments at interview, then you will need to have agreed this prior to your interview with the employer
- You may discuss / outline possible reasonable adjustments in writing/verbally
- MIND suggest thinking about: how much information you want to give - *'You don't have to go into personal details, just focus on how your mental health problem impacts on your job'* and whom to share it with - *for example, the human resources (HR) department may know your diagnosis, but they don't have to tell your supervisor or colleagues.'*
- Draft letter example (follow link and scroll to bottom of page)

Further information and advice

- ❖ Equality Advisory Service: select 'contact us' tab (live chat, enquiry form or call)
- ❖ Disabled students helpline (Disability Rights UK)
- ❖ ACAS helpline (employment law)
- ❖ ACAS - reasonable adjustments
- ❖ RETHINK - reasonable adjustments at work
- ❖ SHU Wellbeing Service

Check out our webinar video via Unihub resources:

[Disclosure and reasonable adjustments](#)

Concerned that you've been discriminated against? See info page here and useful contacts here

Q&A with **Nikki Sharpe**
(**Employment
Specialist Solicitor**)

bestsolicitors 
more than law

Q: Do you need a formal disability diagnosis to be protected under the Equality Act (2010)?

A: You do not have to have a formal disability diagnosis but in order to establish a disability which is required under the Act you would need to show the criteria at [Section 6 of the Equality Act 2010](#)

Q: Does the Equality Act (2010) and reasonable adjustments still apply to things like a placement year as part of my degree, an internship or a week of work experience?

A: Yes

Q: Does it matter if the experience is paid or unpaid (in terms of being protected under the Equality Act)?

A: No

Q: How much detail do I have to provide when I disclose my disability?

A: What, if any, adjustments are required

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How do I find employers who are positive about staff wellbeing?

Mindful employers

- Employers who display the 'mindful employer' mark are displaying a commitment to improve the working lives of their staff. View employer list [here](#)



Time to change 'Employer Pledge'

- Time to change are a 'social movement' working to change the way mental health problems are perceived and talked about
- Employers who sign the pledge are demonstrating their commitment to changing how mental health is perceived in the workplace and aim to make sure that such employees feel supported. You can view employers who have signed up [here](#)



The Workplace Wellbeing Charter

- This charter is about employers making a meaningful commitment to the health and wellbeing of their workforce
- Search (over 1000) employer members [here](#)



Business in the community: wellbeing

- [Case studies](#) of employers who have engaged in a wellbeing initiative or project

Vercida

- Can search for roles using various employer criteria e.g. 'mental health initiatives'

You may also find it helpful to look at organisations signed up to more general disability schemes (e.g. [Disability confident](#)). See [here](#) for Sheffield-only list under 'useful files'.



[EmployAbility](#) - Organisation set up to support disabled students and graduates. Check out a list of disability inclusive employers - plus find out about vacancies, insight days and specialist recruitment events

[My Plus Student Club](#) - Disability-focused careers website where you can search for jobs and internships and view a disability-friendly employer list. You can also sign up for free and get job alerts

Further information and advice

- ❖ [SHU Careers Connect disability page](#)

Check out our webinar videos via Unihub resources:

[Finding m/h friendly employers](#)

[Managing interview anxiety](#)